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SHAKESPEARE

SELECT PLAYS

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

EDITED BY

WILLIAM ALDIS WRIGHT, M.A.

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PREFACE.

The first edition of this play was issued in quarto in 1600 by Thomas Fisher, under the title 'A Midsommer nights dreame. As it hath beene sundry times publickely acted, by the Right honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his seruants. Written by William Shakespeare.' It was entered at Stationers' Hall on the 8th of October, and in the same year a pirated edition by James Roberts appeared. Fisher's and Roberts's editions are spoken of in the Notes as the first and second quartos, and from the latter of these the play as it appears in the first folio was printed in 1623. But although it was not printed, so far as we know, before 1600, it was written at least as early as 1598, for 'Midsummers Night Dreame' is enumerated among Shakespeare's plays by Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* (p. 282), which was published in that year. How long before this time it had been written is to a great extent a matter of pure conjecture. Steevens, in his note on ii. i. 15, 'And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear,' quotes a passage in which the same thought occurs from an old comedy called *The Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll*, 1600, where an enchanter says:—

'Twas I that led you through the painted meads
When the light fairies danc'd upon the flowers,
Hanging on every leaf an orient pearl.'

Malone pointed out that although no earlier edition is known of this anonymous comedy than that of 1600 yet Doctor Dodypoll is mentioned by Nashe in 1596, in his preface to Gabriel Harvey's *Hunt is Up*. This however proves nothing, for Nashe

only mentions the name 'doctor Dodypowle,' without referring to the play, and Dodipoll was a synonym for a blockhead as early as Latimer's time. In endeavouring therefore to approximate to the date of our play, we may leave out of consideration the passage quoted by Steevens; for it is, to say the least, quite as probable that the author of the *Wisdom of Doctor Dodypoll* borrowed from the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, as that Shakespeare borrowed from him a conceit which is not very far-fetched. All that we really know is that the *Midsummer Night's Dream* was written before 1598. Chetwood, in his *British Theatre*, published in Dublin in 1750, gives a list of the early editions of Shakespeare's plays, in which appears 'A moste pleasaunte comedie, called A *Midsummer Night's Dreame*, wythe the freakes of the fayries,' which is said to have been published in 1595. But Chetwood's descriptions have been pronounced fictitious by Steevens, and the spelling of 'wythe' is sufficient to condemn the present title as spurious. Malone at first placed the *Midsummer Night's Dream* in the year 1595, then as early as 1592, but his later opinion was that it was written in 1594. In that year Dr. King, afterwards Bishop of London, preached at York a series of sermons upon the history of Jonah, which were published in 1618 under the title '*Lectures upon Ionas*.' The second lecture (p. 36) contains a description of the disastrous season, to which Titania is supposed to refer in her reproaches of Oberon (ii. 1. 81-117), and which she attributes to their quarrel. 'The moneths of the year haue not yet gone about, wherin the Lord hath bowed the heauens. and come down amongst vs with more tokens and earnestes of his wrath intended, then the agedst man of our land is able to recount of so small a time. For say, if eucr the windes, since they blew one against the other, haue beene more common, & more tempestuous, as if the foure endes of heauen had conspired to turne the foundations of the earth vpside downe; thunders and lightnings neither seasonable for the time, and withall most terrible, with such effects brought

forth, that the childe vnborne shall speake of it. The anger of the clouds hath beene powred downe vpon our heads, both with abundance and (sauing to those that felt it) with incredible violence; the aire threatned our miseries with a blazing starre; the pillars of the earth tottered in many whole countries and tracts of our llande; the arrowes of a woefull pestilence haue beene cast abroad at large in all the quarters of our realme, euen to the emptying and dispeopling of some parts thereof; treasons against our Queene and countrey we have knowne many and mighty, monstrous to bee imagined, from a number of Lyons whelps, lurking in their dennes and watching their houre, to vndoe vs; our expectation and comfort so fayled vs in France, as if our right armes had beene pulled from our shoulders.' The marginal note to this passage shews the date to which it refers. 'The yeare of the Lord 1593, and 1594.' Dr. King's description of the extraordinary disturbance of the elements is confirmed by Stowe in his Annals for the same year. Under date 1594 he says, 'In this moneth of March was many great stormes of winde, which ouerturned trees, steeples, barns, houses, &c. namely in Worcestershire, in Beaudly forrest many Oakes were ouerturned The 11. of Aprill, a raine continued very sore more then 24. houres long and withall, such a winde from the north, as pearced the wals of houses, were they neuer so strong . . . This yeere in the month of May, fell many great showres of raine, but in the moneths of Iune and Iuly, much more: for it commonly rained euerie day, or night, till S. Iames day, and two daies after together most extreemly, all which notwithstanding, in the moneth of August there followed a faire haruest, but in the moneth of September fell great raines, which raised high waters, such as staid the carriages, and bare downe bridges, at Cambridge, Ware, and else where, in many places. Also the price of graine grewe to be such, as a strike or bushell of Rie was sold for fiue shillings, a bushell of wheat for sixe, seuen, or eight shillings, &c. for still it rose in price, which dearth happened (after

the common opinion) more by meanes of ouermuch transporting, by our owne merchants for their priuate gaine, than through the vnseasonablenesse of the weather passed,' (Annales, ed. 1601, pp. 1274-9). A similar description is given in the journal of Dr. Simon Forman, the astrologer, which is quoted by Mr. Halliwell (Phillipps) in his Introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (p. 6, ed. 1841), from MS. 384 in the Ashmolcan Museum, Oxford. These passages have been so often referred to as containing the prose version of Titania's speech that I have thought it best to give them at length, if only for the purpose of shewing that in all probability Shakespeare had not the year 1594 in his mind at all. It is true that King, and Stowe, and Forman alike describe great storms of wind and rain and disastrous floods as characterising this year, but notwithstanding we are told 'in the moneth of August there followed a faire haruest,' and the subsequent high prices of corn are attributed not to a deficiency in the crop but to the avarice of merchants in exporting it for their own gain. Now this does not agree with Titania's description of the fatal consequences of her quarrel with Oberon, through which

'The green corn

Hath rotted, ere his youth attain'd a beard.'

In this point alone there is such an important discrepancy that if Shakespeare referred to any particular season we may without doubt affirm it was not to the year 1594, and therefore the passages which have been quoted have no bearing upon the date of the play. I am even sceptical enough to think that Titania's speech not only does not describe the events of the year 1594, or of the other bad seasons which happened at this time, but that it is purely the product of the poet's own imagination, and that the picture which it presents had no original in the world of fact; any more than Oberon's bank or Titania's bower.

Another passage which has been appealed to as afford-

ing internal evidence of the date of our play is in v. 1. 52, 53, where Theseus reads from the list of performances submitted to him for approval by the master of the revels,

‘The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning, late deceased in beggary’;

in which some see an allusion to the death of Spenser in 1599, others to that of Grene in 1592. In the former case the lines must have been interpolated after Spenser's death, for we know the play was in existence in 1598. It was Knight who first suggested that the reference is to the death of Greene. Rejecting the supposition of Warton that Shakespeare here alluded to Spenser's poem entitled “The Teares of the Muses, on the neglect and contempt of learning,” which appeared in 1591, he maintains, ‘These expressions are too precise and limited to refer to the tears of the Muses for the decay of knowledge and art. We cannot divest ourselves of the belief that some real person, and some real death, was alluded to. May we hazard a conjecture? Grene, a man of learning, and one whom Shakespeare in the generosity of his nature might wish to point at kindly, died in 1592, in a condition that might truly be called beggary. But how was his death, any more than that of Spenser, to be the occasion of “some satire keen and critical”? Every student of our literary history will remember the famous controversy of Nash and Gabriel Harvey, which was begun by Harvey's publication, in 1592, of Four Letters, and certain Sonnets, especially touching Robert Grene, and other parties by him abused.’ Robert Grene was dead; but Harvey came forward, in revenge of an incautious attack of the unhappy poet, to satirize him in his grave—to hold up his vices and his misfortunes to the public scorn—to be “keen and critical” upon “learning late deccas'd in beggary.” The conjecture which we offer may have little weight, and the point is certainly of very small consequence.’ It may safely be said that the conjecture would have had more weight if the reasons

for it had not been given, for it is difficult to see any parallel between Gabriel Harvey's satire and

‘The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of learning,’

which must of necessity satirize some person or persons other than him whose death is mourned, even supposing that any particular person is referred to. On the whole, I am inclined to think that Spenser's poem may have suggested to Shakespeare a title for the piece submitted to Theseus, and that we need not press for any closer parallel between them.

Chalmers, in his Supplemental Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare-Papers (pp. 359-370), gives the reasons which induced him to place the composition of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* in the early part of 1598. He finds, in the speech of Theseus at the beginning of the fifth act, the line,

‘One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,’

which, he says, ‘is, plainly, a sarcasm on Lodge's pamphlet, called *Wits Miserie, and the Worlds Madnesse*; discovering the Incarnate Devils of this age.’ Lodge's tract was printed in 1596, and as he mentions other poets and suppresses Shakespeare's name Chalmers infers that Shakespeare in revenge wrote the line which is quoted above. An equally strong reason for believing that Shakespeare had read Lodge's tract before writing *Midsummer Night's Dream*, is that he uses the word ‘compact,’ which is also found in Lodge.

The next step in Chalmers's argument is that in 1597 there was a poem, entitled *Pyramus and Thisbe*, published by Dunstan Gale, which in his opinion was prior to Shakespeare's work. But as no one has seen this edition of Gale's poem, and as the story of *Pyramus and Thisbe* was accessible to Shakespeare from other sources long before 1597, we may dismiss this piece of evidence brought forward by Chalmers as having no decisive weight. He next takes for granted what is merely suggested by Malone, that Shakespeare borrowed from a comedy called the *Wisdom of Dog or Dodipoll*, and

further that this comedy was published in, or before, the year 1596. I have given reasons above for believing that this suggestion also may be disregarded. Again, says Chalmers, 'The Faery Queen helped Shakspeare to many hints,' and 'the second volume of the Faery Queen was published in 1596.' To this I would add, what Chalmers himself should have stated, that although the second volume of Spenser's poem was not published till 1596, the first appeared in 1590, and if Shakespeare borrowed any ideas from it at all he had an opportunity of doing so long before 1596. This therefore may be consigned to the limbo of worthless evidence. Further, in the speech of Egeus, in which he claims the ancient privilege of Athens, to dispose of his daughter either to Demetrius or to death, Chalmers sees a direct reference to a bill which was introduced into parliament in 1597 for depriving offenders of clergy who should be found guilty of taking away women against their wills. This is certainly the weakest of all the proofs by which Chalmers endeavours to make out his case, for the law which Egeus wished to enforce was against a refractory daughter, who at the time at which he was speaking had not been stolen away by Lysander, and was only too willing to go with him. I have given Chalmers's theory rather more consideration than it deserves, because he has supported it by a parade of evidence, which to him no doubt appeared satisfactory, but which upon examination proves to be of absolutely no value.

Another point, which has a bearing upon the date of the play, is the occasion for which it was written. If this could be determined with any degree of probability we should be able to ascertain within a little the time at which it was composed. But here again we embark upon a wide sea of conjecture, with neither star nor compass to guide us. That the *Midsummer Night's Dream* may have been first acted at the marriage of some nobleman, and that, from the various compliments which are paid to Elizabeth, the performance may have taken place when the Queen herself was present,

are no improbable suppositions. But when was this conjuncture of events? No theory which has yet been proposed satisfies both conditions. On the one hand Mr. Gerald Massey maintains that it was to celebrate the marriage of Lord Southampton with Elizabeth Vernon that Shakespeare composed the *Midsummer Night's Dream*; but as this marriage did not take place till 1598, and was then kept secret in order to avoid the Queen's displeasure, Mr. Massey supposes that the play was written some time before, when it was thought probable that the Queen's consent might have been obtained, and he accordingly places it in 1595. He goes further and believes that in the play 'many touches tend to show that Hermia is Lady Rich, and Helena, Elizabeth Vernon' (*The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets unfolded*, p. 475). 'Perhaps,' he adds in a note (p. 481), it was one of the Plays presented before Mr. Secretary Cecil and Lord Southampton, when they were leaving London for Paris, in January, 1598, at which time, as Rowland White relates, the Earl's marriage was secretly talked of.' It appears that the exigencies of Mr. Massey's theory have here driven him into great straits. That Southampton was not married to Elizabeth Vernon till the summer of 1598, is all but certain. If therefore the *Midsummer Night's Dream* was one of the plays acted before Cecil and Southampton in January, 1598, it was not in honour of the marriage of the latter. If it was not one of these plays we are not concerned with what happened on that occasion. In fact we know nothing whatever about the matter, and of guesses like these there is neither end nor profit. Elze, who rejects the date offered by Mr. Massey's theory as too late, advances a conjecture of his own which must be regarded as a conjecture only, having no evidence whatever to support it. To use his own language, he maintains that 'all indications point to the fact that the *Midsummer Night's Dream* was written for and performed at the marriage of the Earl of Essex in 1590' with Lady Frances Sidney the widow of Sir Philip Sidney. He regards *Theseus* and *Hippolyta* as the

representatives of the bridal couple. Theseus was a captain, so was Essex. Theseus was a huntsman, so may Essex have been. Theseus was welcomed by 'great clerks'; Essex had an Eclogue Gratulatory addressed to him by George Peele on his return from the Spanish campaign in 1589. Theseus was faithless in love, and the amours of Essex were matters of public notoriety. So, there being a river at Monmouth and a river in Macedon, the parallel is complete. Moreover, Kurz, who adopts Elze's hypothesis and thinks that the *Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed, 'not on the marriage-day itself but on the May-day festival which followed close afterwards,' looking in the calendar found out moonshine, and ascertained that there was a new moon on April 30, 1590, giving thereby an unexpected significance to the introductory lines of the play¹. We have but to take another step on this baseless ladder and we find the Essex hypothesis explains, what has been hitherto unproved, how it was that Shakespeare enjoyed the early patronage of Essex, and who it was that introduced him to Southampton. It was the performance which 'must necessarily have drawn the attention of Essex to the poet,' and 'it is now beyond all doubt' that Essex brought him to the notice of Southampton. In such questions it would be well to remember the maxim of the ancient rabbis, 'Teach thy tongue to say, I do not know.'

If we attempt to arrange the plays which Meres attributes to Shakespeare, so as to distribute them over the period from 1589 to 1598, we shall find two gaps, in either of which we might conjecturally place the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The interval from 1589 to 1591 is filled up by *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *Titus Andronicus*. In 1593, 1594 are placed Richard

¹ But in the play the new moon is on Theseus' wedding day, that is, the 1st of May; and the kindness of Professor Adams enables me to state that the nearest new moon to May 1, 1590, was on April 23, and that there was a new moon on May 1 in 1592.

the Second, Richard the Third, King John, and in these years appeared Venus and Adonis and Lucrece. The Merchant of Venice is assigned to 1596, and Henry the Fourth to 1597. Besides these there are the three Parts of Henry the Sixth, which Meres does not mention, but which, if Shakespeare's at all, must belong to the earlier part of this period, and 'Loue Labours Wonne,' whatever this may have been. On the whole, I am disposed to agree with Professor Dowden in regarding the Two Gentlemen of Verona as earlier than the Midsummer Night's Dream, while I cannot think the latter was composed after the plays assigned above to 1593, 1594, and would therefore place it in the interval from 1591 to 1593, when perhaps Romeo and Juliet may have been begun.

But if conjecture has dealt freely with the indeterminate problem of the date and first occasion of our play, these speculations are outdone by the theories which have been advanced to explain the famous speech of Oberon to Puck (ii. 1. 148-168), regarded as a political allegory. Warburton was the first to propound an elaborate interpretation from this point of view. Starting with the assumption that by the 'fair vestal throned by the west' is meant Queen Elizabeth, he argues that the mermaid must denote some eminent personage of her time, 'of whom it had been inconvenient for the author to speak openly, either in praise or dispraise.' 'All this agrees with Mary Queen of Scots, and with no other. Queen Elizabeth could not bear to hear her commended; and her successor would not forgive her satirist.' 'She is called a *mermaid*, 1. To denote her reign over a kingdom situate in the sea, and 2. Her beauty and intemperate lust.' That she was on a dolphin's back points to her marriage with the dauphin of France. 'Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,' alludes to her great abilities and learning which rendered her the most accomplished princess of her age. The rude sea which grew civil at her song was 'Scotland encircled with the ocean, which rose up in arms against the regent while she was in France. But her return home

presently quieted those disorders.' The 'certain stars' who shot madly from their spheres were some of the English nobility who espoused her cause; 'the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, who fell in her quarrel; and principally the great Duke of Norfolk, whose projected marriage with her was attended with such fatal consequences.' Such is the elaborate allegory which Warburton finds concealed in the fanciful description given by Oberon of the origin of the flower by means of whose magical properties he wished to revenge himself upon Titania. That in the fair vestal throned by the west Shakespeare intended a compliment to Queen Elizabeth is probably the only part of Warburton's theory with which any one will agree. Ritson and others have pointed out important discrepancies in his interpretation which is really not worth serious investigation. But Warburton is outdone by Boaden, who in his *Essay on the Sonnets of Shakespeare* (1837) finds in Oberon's description of the mermaid no royal siren like Mary Queen of Scots, but the sham mermaid of the Princely Pleasures at Kenilworth when Elizabeth paid her famous visit to Leicester in 1575. Shakespeare was then a boy of eleven, and we are told *may* have been present as a delighted spectator. His childhood recollection of the pageant takes the form some fifteen or twenty years afterwards in which it now appears. Oberon speaks of a mermaid on a dolphin's back, and at Kenilworth there was Triton in the likeness of a mermaid, and Proteus appeared sitting on a dolphin's back, 'within the which dolphyn,' says Gascoigne, 'a consort of musicke was secretly placed,' which of course is in plain prose the dulcet and harmonious breath of which Oberon describes the wondrous effects. The 'certain stars' which shot madly from their spheres are according to this interpretation no misguided nobles rushing upon their own destruction, but the fireworks which accompanied the royal entertainment. Surely no fireworks before or since have been so glorified. Finally, misled by the magic of Sir Walter Scott, the author of this theory identifies as 'the little

western flower' poor Amy Robsart, who had been dead fifteen years before. But what is more remarkable even than that the wit of man should have conceived such an interpretation is that the same conclusion was independently arrived at by another investigator. Mr. Halpin, in his *Oberon's Vision* (Shakes. Soc. Publ.), not only follows the outline of Boaden's theory, that we have in this description an allegorical account of what happened upon the occasion of Elizabeth's visit to Kenilworth, but pursues the allegory with a minuteness of detail which Boaden did not attempt. In fact he takes up the interpretation where Boaden leaves it, and identifying the promontory on which Oberon sat with the 'brays' which are described by Laneham as 'linking a fair park with the castle on the south,' he disposes of the rest of the allegory in this wise. Cupid all armed, flying between the cold moon and the earth, is the Earl of Leicester, wavering in his passion between Queen Elizabeth and the Lady Douglas, Countess of Sheffield, to whom he was believed to be privately married. The aim which he took at a fair vestal throned by the west is the attempt made by him upon this occasion to win the hand of Elizabeth. This was defeated by 'the pride, prudery, and jealousy of power, which invariably swayed the tide of Elizabeth's passions, and the Virgin Queen finally departed from Kenilworth Castle unshackled with a matrimonial engagement, and as heartwhole as ever.' The little western flower is Lettice, Countess of Essex, with whom Leicester intrigued during the lifetime of her husband, and whom he afterwards married. We must at any rate give the inventor of this interpretation credit for remarkable ingenuity, but to accept it requires the exercise of something more than faith. If there be an allegorical meaning in Oberon's words why does he suddenly drop allegory and come back to reality when he says to Puck, 'Fetch me that flower'? No one pretends that this has an allegorical significance, and if so, how can it be separated in such a manner from what precedes, that up to this point all is allegory and from this point all is fact?

The fairy mythology of Shakespeare in the *Midsummer Night's Dream* is described by Keightley (*Fairy Mythology*, p. 325) as an attempt to blend 'the Elves of the village with the Fays of romance. His Fairies agree with the former in their diminutive stature,—diminished, indeed, to dimensions inappreciable by village gossips,—in their fondness for dancing, their love of cleanliness, and their child-abstracting propensities. Like the Fays, they form a community, ruled over by the princely Oberon and the fair Titania. There is a court and chivalry: Oberon would have the Queen's sweet changeling to be a "knight of his train to trace the forcest wild." Like earthly monarchs he had his jester, "the shrewd and knavish sprite, called Robin Goodfellow." It is true that Shakespeare has presented these purely English fairies in combination with 'the heroes and heroines of the mythic age of Greece,' but indeed Theseus is Greek in name only. He is an English nobleman, who after service in the wars has returned to his estate and his field sports, and Bottom and his fellows may have been any Warwickshire peasants, hard-handed men of Coventry, but no Athenians. There is no attempt in the whole course of the play to give it a classical colouring, and there is therefore nothing incongruous to a reader in finding himself in company with the Greek-sounding names of Theseus, Egeus and Philostrate in one scene, and Oberon and Robin Goodfellow in another. The play is thoroughly English from beginning to end.

Oberon the fairy king first appears in the old French Romance of *Huon of Bourdeaux*, and is identical with Elberich the dwarf king of the German story of *Otnit in the Heldenbuch*. The name Elberich, or as it appears in the *Nibelungenlied*, Albrich, was changed in passing into French first into Auberich, then into Auberon, and finally became our Oberon. He is introduced by Spenser in the *Fairy Queen* (bk. ii. cant. i. st. 6), where he describes Sir Guyon:—

'Well could he tournay, and in lists debate,
And knighthood tooke of good Sir Huon's hand,
When with King Oberon he came to Faery land.'

And in the tenth canto of the same book (st. 75) he is the allegorical representative of Henry VIII. The wise Elficleos left two sons,

‘Of which faire Elferon,
The eldest brother, did untimely dy;
Whose emptie place the mightie Oberon
Doubly supplde, in spousall and dominion.’

‘Oboram King of Fayeries’ is one of the characters in Greene’s *James the Fourth*, which was not printed till 1598, but was of course written in or before 1592.

The name Titania for the Queen of the Fairies appears to have been the invention of Shakespeare. In *Romeo and Juliet* she is known by the more familiar appellation Queen Mab, and in an entertainment given to Elizabeth by the Earl of Hertford at Elvetham in 1591, there was a speech addressed to the Queen by ‘Aureola, the Quene of Fairy land,’ in which Auberón is mentioned as the Fairy King. Keightley explains the origin of the name Titania, ‘It was the belief of those days that the Fairies were the same as the classic Nymphs, the attendants of Diana: “That fourth kind of spirits,” says King James, “quhilk be the gentilis was called Diana, and her wandering court, and amongst us called the *Pbairie*.” The Fairy Queen was therefore the same as Diana, whom Ovid (*Met.* iii. 173) styles Titania.’ (*Fairy Mythology*, p. 325, note.) In Chaucer’s *Merchant’s Tale*, Pluto is the King of Faerie and his Queen Proserpina, who danced and sang about the well under the laurel in January’s garden.

Puck or Robin Goodfellow is the mischief-loving sprite who in one fairy genealogy is said to be the son of Oberon. His former title is an appellative and not strictly a proper name, and we find him speaking of himself, ‘As I am an honest Puck,’ ‘Else the Puck a liar call.’ In fact Puck, or pouke, is an old word for ‘devil, and it is used in this sense in the *Vision of Piers Ploughman*, 11345 (ed. T. Wright):

‘Out of the poukes pondfold
No maynprise may us fecche.’

And in the Romance of Richard Coer de Lion, 4326 (printed in Weber's Metrical Romances, vol. ii):

‘He is no man he is a pouke.’

The Icelandic *púki* is the same word, and in Friesland the kobold or domestic spirit is called Puk. In Devonshire, pixy is the name for a fairy, and in Worcestershire we are told that the peasants are sometimes *poake ledde*n, that is, misled by a mischievous spirit called *Poake*. ‘Pouk-laden’ is also given in Hartshorne’s Shropshire Glossary. Keightley was of opinion that Shakespeare was the first to confound Puck with the house-spirit or Robin Goodfellow, but it is evident that in popular belief the same mischief-loving qualities which belong to Puck were attributed to Robin Goodfellow long before the time of Shakespeare. Tyndale, in his Obedience of a Christian Man (Parker Soc. ed. p. 321) says, ‘The pope is kin to Robin Goodfellow, which sweepeth the house, washeth the dishes, and purgeth all, by night; but when day cometh, there is nothing found clean.’ And again, in his Exposition of the 1st Epistle of St. John (Parker Soc. ed. p. 139), ‘By reason whereof the scripture . . . is become a maze unto them, in which they wander as in a mist, or (as we say) led by Robin Goodfellow, that they cannot come to the right way, no, though they turn their caps.’ The great source of information with regard to popular beliefs in fairies and spirits is Reginald Scot’s Discovery of Witchcraft, first published in 1584. Of Robin Goodfellow he says (Book iv. ch. 10), ‘In deede your grandams maides were woont to set a boll of milke before him (Incubus) and his cousine Robin good-fellow, for grinding of malt or mustard, and swceping the house at midnight: and you haue also heard that he would chafe exceedingly, if the maid or good-wife of the house, hauing compassion of his nakednes, laid anie clothes for him, becsides his messe of white bread and milke, which was his standing fee. For in that case he saith; What haue we here? Hemton hamten, here will I neuer more tread nor stampen.’ Again (Bk. vii. ch. 15), ‘It is a common

saieing; A lion feareth no bugs. But in our childhood our mothers maids haue so terrified vs with an ouglie diuell hauing hornes on his head, fier in his mouth, and a taile in his breech, eies like a bason, fanges like a dog, clawes like a beare, a skin like a Niger, and a voice roring like a lion, whereby we start and are afraid when we heare one crie Bough: and they haue so fraied us with bull beggers, spirits, witches, vrchens, elues, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, faunes, sylens, kit with the cansticke, tritons, centaurs, dwarfes, giants, imps, calcars, coniurors, nymphes, changlings, *Incubus*, Robin good-fellowe, the spoorne, the mare, the man in the oke, the hell waine, the fierdrake, the puckle, Tom thombe, hob goblin, Tom tumbler, boneles, and such other bugs, that we are afraid of our owne shadowes: in so much as some neuer fcare the diuell, but in a darke night; and then a polled sheepe is a perillous beast, and manic times is taken for our fathers soule, speciallie in a churchyard, where a right hardie man heretofore scant durst passe by night, but his haire would stand vpright.' See also in the same book A Discourse vpon diuels and spirits, c. 21. Burton, in his Anatomy of Melancholy (Part I. Sec. 2. Mem. 1. Subs. 2) discusses the nature of spirits, and among other points the important question whether they are mortal. One of his divisions is as follows: 'Terrestrial devils are those *lares, genii, faunes, satyrs*, wood-nymphs, foliots, fairies, *Robin Goodfellows, Trulli*, &c., which as they are most conversant with men, so they do them most harm . . . Some put our fairies into this rank, which have been in former time adored with much superstition, with sweeping their houses, and setting of a pail of clean water, good victuals, and the like; and then they should not be pinched, but find money in their shoes, and be fortunate in their enterprises. These are they that dance on heaths and greens, as Lavater thinks with Trithemius, and as Olaus Magnus adds, leave that green circle, which we commonly find in plain fields, which others hold to proceed from a meteor falling, or some accidental rankness of the ground; so nature sports herself . . . Paracelsus reckons up many

places in Germany, where they do usually walk in little coats, some two foot long. A bigger kind there is of them, called with us *bobgoblins*, and *Robin Goodfellows*, that would, in those superstitious times, grind eorn for a mess of milk, eut wood, or do any manner of drudgery work . . . And so likewise those which Mizaldus calls *Ambulones*, that walk about midnight on great heaths and desert places, which (saith Lavater) *draw men out of the way, and lead them all night a by-away, or quite bar them of their way*. These have several names in several places; we commonly call them *pucks*.' To the same effect writes Harsnet in his Declaration of Popish Imposture (p. 134), a book quoted in the Notes to King Lear: 'And if that the bowle of curds, & creame were not duly set out for *Robin good-fellow* the Frier, & *Sisse* the dairy-maide, to meete at *binch pinch*, and *laugh not*, when the good wife was a bed, why then, either the pottage was burnt to next day in the pot, or the cheese would not curdle, or the butter would not come, or the ale in the fat would neuer haue good head.' The 'walking fire' in Lear, which Edgar takes for the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet is but one of the forms in which Robin appears. In the black-letter ballad of The Merry Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, which is reprinted by Mr. Halliwell (Phillipps) in his Introduction to a Midsummer Night's Dream, is the following stanza (p. 36):

'Sometimes he'd counterfeit a voyce,
And travellers call astray,
Sometimes a walking fire he'd be,
And lead them from their way.'

Another ballad, printed in Perey's Reliques (vol. iii. book 2), which relates 'The Merry Pranks of Robin Goodfellow,' may be consulted by those who wish to pursue the subject further. See also Drayton, Nymphidia, 282 &c., Milton, L'Allegro, 100-114, and an essay by Mr. Thoms on the Folklore of Shakespeare.

It has been suggested that the device employed by Oberon to enchan Titania, by anointing her eyelids with the juice

of a flower, may have been borrowed by Shakespeare from the Spanish Romance of Diana by George of Montemayor. But apart from the difficulty which arises from the fact that no English translation of this romance is known before that published by Yong in 1598, there is no necessity to suppose that Shakespeare was indebted to any one for what must have been a familiar element in all incantations at a time when a belief in witchcraft was common. Percy (*Reliques*, vol. iii. book 2, end) quotes a receipt by the celebrated astrologer Dr. Dee for 'An unguent to annoynt under the Eyelids, and upon the Eyelids eveninge and morninge: but especially when you call,' that is, upon the fairies. It consisted of a decoction of various flowers.

Dr. Farmer observed to Malone that in the lines spoken by Pyramus 'Approach, ye furies fell,' &c., and in those of Thisbe's speech,

'O sisters three,
Come, come to me,
With hands as pale as milk,'

Shakespeare intended to ridicule a passage in Damon and Pythias, by Richard Edwards, 1582:

'Ye furies, all at once
On me your torments trie . . .
Gripe me, you greedy griefs,
And present pangues of death,
You sisters three, with cruel handes
With speed come stop my breath!'

Certainly both in this play and in the tragical comedy of Appius and Virginia, printed in 1575, may be found doggerel no better than that which he puts into the mouth of Bottom. See for example the speech of Judge Appius to Claudius, beginning,

'The furies fell of Limbo lake
My princely days do short, &c.'

It is also worth while to notice that the song quoted in *Romeo and Juliet*, iv. 5. 128,

'When griping grief the heart doth wound &c.,'

is by the author of *Damon and Pythias*.

In Mr. Collier's *Annals of the Stage* (ii. 30-36) is related a curious story of a charge made against the Bishop of Lincoln by one John Spencer for having had a play performed in his house in London on Sunday, September 27, 1631. From what follows it appears that the play in question was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but there is evidently something wrong about the story, for the 27th of September in the year 1631 was on a Tuesday. Taking it however for what it is worth, the document from which Mr. Collier quotes, which purports to be an order of the Archbishop's Court, decrees, 'that Mr. Wilson, because he was a speciall plotter and contriver of this business, and did in such a brutishe manner acte the same with an Asses head, and therefore hee shall, uppon Tuisday next, from 6 of the clocke in the morning till six of the clocke at night, sitt in the Porters Lodge at my Lords Bishopps House, with his feete in the stocks, and attyred with his asse head, and a bottle of hay sett before him, and this subscription on his breast :

'Good people I have played the beast,
And brought ill things to passe :
I was a man, but thus have made
My selfe a silly Asse.'

After the Restoration we find in 1661 a play called *The Merry conceited Humors of Bottom the Weaver*, in which Theseus and his court are left out altogether, and nothing remains but the fairies and the clowns. It had perhaps been played privately after the suppression of the theatres. On the 29th of September 1662, Mr. Pepys having endured a period of abstinence from drink and play-going, in accordance with a vow which came to an end on that day, rewarded his constancy by going to the King's Theatre, where, he says, 'we saw "*Midsummer's Night's Dream*," which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it^a is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life.' Mr. Pepys was perhaps a little difficult to please, and his critical judgement was not final. The *Tempest* is the most innocent play he

ever saw, and has no great wit. He calls *The Taming of the Shrew* a 'silly play,' while *Othello*, which he had once thought 'mighty good,' seemed to him but a mean thing after reading '*The Adventures of Five Houres.*' No doubt he reflected the taste of his time, and it is not much to be wondered at that he did not care for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There is in truth no plot in the play at all and very little dramatic movement. Indeed it is rather a masque than a play, or at any rate a play of situation rather than of plot or character. And as with a masque was combined the antimasque as a kind of comic counterpart or farce, so in the present play the fairies and the clowns supply the place of the antimasque of which they form the sub-divisions or semi-choruses.

The title of the play has often been the subject of dispute. Aubrey has a story, which is as worthless as most of his worthless gossip is, to the effect that '*The humour of the constable in A Midsummer-Night-Dreame he happened to take at Crendon [or Grendon] in Bucks (I think it was Midsomer-night that he happened to be there); which is the road from London to Stratford; and there was living that constable about 1642, when I first came to Oxon.*' (Shakespeare, ed. 1821, ii. 491.) In the play itself the time is about May day, but Shakespeare from haste or inadvertence has fallen into some confusion in regard to it. Theseus' opening words point to April 27, four days before the new moon which was to behold the night of his marriage with Hippolyta. He orders *Hermia*

'By the next new moon,

The sealing day between my love and me,'

to make up her mind either to wed Demetrius or be condemned to death or perpetual virginity. The next night, which would be April 28, Lysander appoints for *Hermia* to escape with him from Athens. 'Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night.' The night of the second day is occupied with the adventures in the wood, and in the morning the

lovers are discovered by Theseus and his huntsmen, and it is supposed that they have risen early to observe the rite of May. So that the morning of the third day is the 1st of May, and the last two days of April are lost altogether. Titania's reference to the 'middle-summer's spring' must therefore be to the summer of the preceding year. It is a curious fact, on which however I would not lay too much stress, that in 1592 there was a new moon on the 1st of May; so that if *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written so as to be acted on a May day when the actual age of the moon corresponded with its age in the play, it must have been written for May day 1592.

Midsummer Eve appears to have been regarded as a period when the imagination ran riot, and many of the old superstitions which characterised it are recorded in Brand's *Popular Antiquities*. For instance, 'Grose tells us that any person fasting on Midsummer Eve, and sitting in the church porch, will at midnight see the spirits of the persons of that parish who will die that year, come and knock at the church door, in the order and succession in which they will die (i. p. 331). 'Maidens practised divination on this night to find out their future husbands, and Levinus Lemnius . . . tells us that the Low Dutch have a proverb, that when men have passed a troublesome night's rest, and could not sleep at all, they say, we have passed St. John Baptist's Night; that is, we have not taken any sleep, but watched all night; and not only so, but we have been in great troubles, noyses, clamours, and stirs, that have held us waking' (i. p. 305). We know that Malvolio's strange conduct is described by Olivia (*Twelfth Night*, iii. 4. 61) as very Midsummer madness, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* therefore is no inappropriate title for the series of wild incongruities of which the play consists.

W. A. W.

CAMBRIDGE,

20 October, 1877.

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ACT I.

SCENE I. *Athens. The palace of THESEUS.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, and Attendants.

The. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another moon: but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! she lingers my desires,
Like to a step-dame or a dowager
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

Hip. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.

10

The. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;

Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth;
 Turn, melancholy forth to funerals;
 The pale companion is not for our pomp. [*Exit Philostrate.*
 Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
 And won thy love, doing thee injuries;
 But I will wed thee in another key,
 With pomp, with triumph and with revelling.

Enter EGEUS, HERMIA, LYSANDER, and DEMETRIUS.

Ege. Happy be Theseus, our renowned duke! 20

The. Thanks, good Egeus: what's the news with thee?

Ege. Full of vexation come I, with complaint
 Against my child, my daughter Hermia.
 Stand forth, Demetrius. My noble lord,
 This man hath my consent to marry her.
 Stand forth, Lysander: and, my gracious duke,
 This man hath bewitch'd the bosom of my child:
 Thou, thou, Lysander, thou hast given her rhymes
 And interchanged love-tokens with my child:
 Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung 30
 With feigning voice verses of feigning love,
 And stolen the impression of her fantasy
 With bracelets of thy hair, rings, gawds, conceits,
 Knacks, trifles, nosegays, sweetmeats, messengers
 Of strong prevailment in unhardened youth:
 With cunning hast thou filch'd my daughter's heart,
 Turn'd her obedience, which is due to me,
 To stubborn harshness: and, my gracious duke,
 Be it so she will not here before your grace
 Consent to marry with Demetrius, 40
 I beg the ancient privilege of Athens,
 As she is mine, I may dispose of her:
 Which shall be either to this gentleman
 Or to her death, according to our law
 Immediately provided in that case.

The. What say you, Hermia? be advised, fair maid:
 To you your father should be as a god;
 One that composed your beauties, yea, and one

To whom you are but as a form in wax
By him imprinted and within his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it.
Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

Her. So is Lysander.

The. In himself he is;
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
The other must be held the worthier.

Her. I would my father look'd but with my eyes.

The. Rather your eyes must with his judgement look.

Her. I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,
Nor how it may concern my modesty,
In such a presence here to plead my thoughts;
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

The. Either to die the death or to abjure
For ever the society of men.
Therefore, fair Hermia, question your desires;
Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
You can endure the livery of a nun,
For aye to be in shady cloister mew'd,
To live a barren sister all your life,
Chanting faint hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
Thrice-blessed they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
But earthlier happy is the rose distill'd,
Than that which withering on the virgin thorn
Grows, lives and dies in single blessedness.

Her. So will I grow, so live, so die, my lord,
Ere I will yield my virgin patent up
Unto his lordship, whose unwish'd yoke
My soul consents not to give sovereignty.

The. Take time to pause; and, by the next new moon—
The sealing-day betwixt my love and me,

For everlasting bond of fellowship—
Upon that day either prepare to die
For disobedience to your father's will,
Or else to wed Demetrius, as he would;
Or on Diana's altar to protest
For aye austerity and single life.

90

Dem. Relent, sweet Hermia: and, Lysander, yield
Thy crazed title to my certain right.

Lys. You have her father's love, Demetrius;
Let me have Hermia's: do you marry him.

Ege. Scornful Lysander! true, he hath my love,
And what is mine my love shall render him.
And she is mine, and all my right of her
I do estate unto Demetrius.

Lys. I am, my lord, as well deriv'd as he,
As well possess'd; my love is more than his;
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
If not with vantage, as Demetrius';
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am beloved of beauteous Hermia:
Why should not I then prosecute my right?
Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head,
Made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena,
And won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes,
Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry,
Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

100

110

The. I must confess that I have heard so much,
And with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof;
But, being over-full of self-affairs,
My mind did lose it. But, Demetrius, come;
And come, Egeus; you shall go with me,
I have some private schooling for you both.
For you, fair Hermia, look you arm yourself
To fit your fancies to your father's will;
Or else the law of Athens yields you up—
Which by no means we may extenuate—
To death, or to a vow of single life.

120

Come, my Hippolyta: what cheer, my love?
Demetrius and Egeus, go along:
I must employ you in some business
Against our nuptial and confer with you
Of something nearly that concerns yourselves.

Ege. With duty and desire we follow you.

[Exeunt all but Lysander and Hermia.]

Lys. How now, my love! why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

Her. Belike for want of rain, which I could well 130
Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes.

Lys. Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth;
But, either it was different in blood,—

Her. O cross! too high to be enthralld to low.

Lys. Or else misgraffed in respect of years,—

Her. O spite! too old to be engaged to young.

Lys. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends,—

Her. O hell! to choose love by another's eyes. 140

Lys. Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth,
And ere a man hath power to say 'Behold!'
The jaws of darkness do devour it up:
So quick bright things come to confusion.

Her. If then true lovers have been ever cross'd, 150
It stands as an edict in destiny:
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross,
As due to love as thoughts and dreams and sighs,
Wishes and tears, poor fancy's followers.

Lys. A good persuasion: therefore, hear me, Hermia.

I have a widow aunt, a dowager
 Of great revenue, and she hath no child:
 From Athens is her house remote seven leagues;
 And she respects me as her only son. 160
 There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee;
 And to that place the sharp Athenian law
 Cannot pursue us. If thou lovest me then,
 Steal forth thy father's house to-morrow night;
 And in the wood, a league without the town,
 Where I did meet thee once with Helena,
 To do observance to a morn of May,
 There will I stay for thee.

Her. My good Lysander!
 I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow,
 By his best arrow with the golden head, 170
 By the simplicity of Venus' doves,
 By that which knitteth souls and prospers loves,
 And by that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,
 When the false Trojan under sail was seen,
 By all the vows that ever men have broke,
 In number more than ever women spoke,
 In that same place thou hast appointed me,
 To-morrow truly will I meet with thee.

Lys. Keep promise, love. Look, here comes Helena.

Enter HELENA.

Her. God speed fair Helena! whither away? 180
Hel. Call you me fair? that fair again unsay.
 Demetrius loves your fair: O happy fair!
 Your eyes are lode-stars; and your tongue's sweet air
 More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,
 When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear.
 Sickness is catching: O, were favour so,
 Yours would I catch, fair Hermia, ere I go;
 My ear should catch your voice, my eye your eye,
 My tongue should catch your tongue's sweet melody.
 Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated, 190
 The rest I'd give to be to you translated.

O, teach me how you look, and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

Her. I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

Hel. O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!

Her. I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

Hel. O that my prayers could such affection move!

Her. The more I hate, the more he follows me.

Hel. The more I love, the more he hateth me.

Her. His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine. 200

Hel. None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!

Her. Take comfort: he no more shall see my face;

Lysander and myself will fly this place.

Before the time I did Lysander see,

Seem'd Athens as a paradise to me:

O, then, what graces in my love do dwell,

That he hath turn'd a heaven unto a hell!

Lys. Helen, to you our minds we will unfold:

To-morrow night, when Phœbe doth behold

Her silver visage in the watery glass, 210

Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass,

A time that lovers' flights doth still conceal,

Through Athens' gates have we devised to steal.

Her. And in the wood, where often you and I

Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie,

Emptying our bosoms of their counsel sweet,

There my Lysander and myself shall meet;

And thence from Athens turn away our eyes,

To seek new friends and stranger companies.

Farewell, sweet playfellow: pray thou for us; 220

And good luck grant thee thy Demetrius!

Keep word, Lysander: we must starve our sight

From lovers' food till morrow deep midnight.

Lys. I will, my Hermia. [*Exit Herm.*] Helena, adieu:
As you on him, Demetrius dote on you! [*Exit.*]

Hel. How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.

But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
 He will not know what all but he do know:
 And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes, 230
 So I, admiring of his qualities:
 Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
 Love can transpose to form and dignity:
 Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
 And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
 Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;
 Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste:
 And therefore is Love said to be a child,
 Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
 As waggish boys in game themselves forswear, 240
 So the boy Love is perjured every where:
 For ere Demetrius look'd on Hermia's eyne,
 He hail'd down oaths that he was only mine;
 And when this hail some heat from Hermia felt,
 So he dissolved, and showers of oaths did melt.
 I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight:
 Then to the wood will he to-morrow night
 Pursue her; and for this intelligence
 If I have thanks, it is a dear expense:
 But herein mean I to enrich my pain, 250
 To have his sight thither and back again. [Exit.

SCENE II. *Athens.* QUINCE'S house.

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and
STARVELING.

Quin. Is all our company here?

Bot. You were best to call them generally, man by man,
according to the scrip.

Quin. Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is
thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude
before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at
night.

Bot. First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on; then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point. 10

Quin. Marry, our play is, The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.

Bot. A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

Quin. Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

Bot. Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

Quin. You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

Bot. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

Quin. A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love. 20

Bot. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole in some measure. To the rest: yet my chief humour is for a tyrant: I could play Eracles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split.

The raging rocks
And shivering shocks
Shall break the locks
Of prison gates;
And Phibbus' car
Shall shine from far
And make and mar

30

The foolish Fates.

This was lofty! Now name the rest of the players. This is Eracles' vein, a tyrant's vein; a lover is more condoling.

Quin. Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

Flu. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

Flu. What is Thisby? a wandering knight?

• *Quin.* It is the lady that Pyramus must love. 40

Flu. Nay, faith, let not me play a woman; I have a beard coming.

Quin. That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

Bot. An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice, 'Thisne, Thisne;' 'Ah Pyramus, my lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!'

Quin. No, no; you must play Pyramus: and, Flute, you Thisby. 50

Bot. Well, proceed.

Quin. Robin Starveling, the tailor.

Star. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

Snout. Here, Peter Quince.

Quin. You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisby's father. Snug, the joiner; you, the lion's part: and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

Snug. Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study. 61

Quin. You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

Bot. Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say 'Let him roar again, let him roar again.'

Quin. An you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all. 70

All. That would hang us, every mother's son.

Bot. I grant you, friends, if that you should fright the ladies out of their wits, they would have no more discretion but to hang us: but I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you as 'twere any nightingale.

Quin. You can play no part but Pyramus; for Pyramus is a sweet-faced man; a proper man, as one shall see in a

summer's day; a most lovely gentleman-like man: therefore you must needs play Pyramus. 80

Bot. Well, I will undertake it. What beard were I best to play it in?

Quin. Why, what you will.

Bot. I will discharge it in either your straw-colour beard, your orange-tawny beard, your purple-in-grain beard, or your French-crown-colour beard, your perfect yellow.

Quin. Some of your French crowns have no hair at all, and then you will play barefaced. But, masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you and desire you, to con them by to-morrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight; there will we rehearse, for if we meet in the city, we shall be dogged with company, and our devices known. In the meantime I will draw a bill of properties, such as our play wants. I pray you, fail me not. 95

Bot. We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect: adieu.

Quin. At the duke's oak we meet.

Bot. Enough; hold or cut bow-strings. [Exeunt.]

ACT II.

SCENE I. *A wood near Athens.*

Enter, from opposite sides, a FAIRY, and PUCK.

Puck. How now, spirit! whither wander you?

Fai. Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander every where,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;

And I serve the fairy queen,
 To dew her orbs upon the green.
 The cowslips tall her pensioners be: 10
 In their gold coats spots you see;
 Those be rubies, fairy favours,
 In those freckles live their savours:
 I must go seek some dewdrops here
 And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.

Farewell, thou lob of spirits; I'll be gone:
 Our queen and all her elves come here anon.

Puck. The king doth keep his revels here to-night:
 Take heed the queen come not within his sight;
 For Oberon is passing fell and wrath, 20
 Because that she as her attendant hath
 A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king;
 She never had so sweet a changeling;
 And jealous Oberon would have the child
 Knight of his train, to trace the forests wild;
 But she perforce withholds the loved boy,
 Crowns him with flowers and makes him all her joy:
 And now they never meet in grove or green,
 By fountain clear, or spangled starlight seen,
 But they do square, that all their elves for fear 30
 Creep into acorn-cups and hide them there.

Fai. Either I mistake your shape and making quite,
 Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
 Call'd Robin Goodfellow: are not you he
 That frights the maidens of the villagery;
 Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern
 And bootless make the breathless housewife churn;
 And sometime make the drink to bear no barm;
 Misdread night-wanderers, laughing at their harm?
 Those that Hobgoblin call you and sweet Puck, 40
 You do their work, and they shall have good luck:
 Are not you he?

Puck. Thou speak'st aright;
 I am that merry wanderer of the night.

I jest to Oberon and make him smile
 When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
 Neighing in likeness of a filly foal :
 And sometime lurk I in a gossip's bowl,
 In very likeness of a roasted crab,
 And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
 And on her wither'd dewlap pour the ale. 50
 The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,
 Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me ;
 Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,
 And 'tailor' cries, and falls into a cough ;
 And then the whole quire hold their hips and laugh,
 And waxen in their mirth and neeze and swear
 A merrier hour was never wasted there.
 But, room, fairy ! here comes Oberon.

Fai. And here my mistress. Would that he were gone !

*Enter, from one side, OBERON, with his train ; from the other,
 TITANIA, with hers.*

Obe. Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania. 60

Tita. What, jealous Oberon ! Fairies, skip hence :
 I have forsworn his bed and company.

Obe. Tarry, rash wanton : am not I thy lord ?

Tita. Then I must be thy lady : but I know
 When thou hast stolen away from fairy land,
 And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
 Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
 To amorous Phillida. Why art thou here,
 Come from the farthest steppe of India ?
 But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon, 70
 Your buskin'd mistress and your warrior love,
 To Theseus must be wedded, and you come
 To give their bed joy and prosperity.

Obe. How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
 • Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
 Knowing I know thy love to Theseus ?
 Didst thou not lead him through the glimmering night

From Perigenia, whom he ravished?
 And make him with fair *Ægle* break his faith,
 With *Ariadne* and *Antiopa*?

80

Tita. These are the forgeries of jealousy:
 And never, since the middle summer's spring,
 Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
 By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
 Or in the beached margent of the sea,
 To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
 But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
 Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
 As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
 Contagious fogs; which falling in the land
 Have every pelting river made so proud
 That they have overborne their continents:
 The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
 The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
 Hath rotted ere his youth attain'd a beard;
 The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
 And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
 The nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,
 And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
 For lack of tread are undistinguishable:
 The human mortals want their winter here;
 No night is now with hymn or carol blest:
 Therefore the moon, the governess of floods,
 Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
 That rheumatic diseases do abound:
 And thorough this distemperature we see
 The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
 Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
 And on old *Hiems'* thin and icy crown
 An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
 Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
 The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
 Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
 By their increase, now knows not which is which:
 And this same progeny of evils comes

90

100

110

From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

Obe. Do you amend it then; it lies in you:
Why should Titania cross her Oberon?
I do but beg a little changeling boy,
To be my henchman.

120

Tita. Set your heart at rest:
The fairy land buys not the child of me.
His mother was a votaress of my order:
And, in the spiced Indian air, by night,
Full often hath she gossip'd by my side,
And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
Marking the embarked traders on the flood,
When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
Following,—her womb then rich with my young squire,—
Would imitate, and sail upon the land,
To fetch me trifles, and return again,
As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
But she, being mortal, of that boy did die;
And for her sake do I rear up her boy,
And for her sake I will not part with him.

130

Obe. How long within this wood intend you stay?

Tita. Perchance till after Theseus' wedding-day.
If you will patiently dance in our round
And see our moonlight revels, go with us;
If not, shun me, and I will spare your haunts.

140

Obe. Give me that boy, and I will go with thee.

Tita. Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies, away!
We shall chide downright, if I longer stay.

[*Exit Titania with her train.*]

Obe. Well, go thy way; thou shalt not from this grove
Till I torment thee for this injury.
My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since once I sat upon a promontory,

And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back 150
 Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
 That the rude sea grew civil at her song
 And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
 To hear the sea-maid's music.

Puck. I remember.

Obe. That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
 Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
 Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took
 At a fair vestal throned by the west,
 And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts; 160
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
 Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
 And the imperial votaress passed on,
 In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
 Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
 It fell upon a little western flower,
 Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
 And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
 Fetch me that flower; the herb I shew'd thee once:
 The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid 170
 Will make or man or woman madly dote
 Upon the next live creature that it sees.
 Fetch me this herb; and be thou here again
 Ere the leviathan can swim a league.

Puck. I'll put a girdle round about the earth
 In forty minutes. [Exit

Obe. Having once this juice,
 I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
 And drop the liquor of it in her eyes.
 The next thing then she waking looks upon,
 Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, 180
 On meddling monkey, or on busy ape,
 She shall pursue it with the soul of love:
 And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
 As I can take it with another herb,

I'll make her render up her page to me.
But who comes here? I am invisible;
And I will overhear their conference.

Enter DEMETRIUS, HELENA following him.

Dem. I love thee not, therefore pursue me not.
Where is Lysander and fair Hermia?
The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me. 190
Thou told'st me they were stolen unto this wood;
And here am I, and wood within this wood,
Because I cannot meet my Hermia.
Hence, get thee gone, and follow me no more.

Hel. You draw me, you hard-hearted adamant:
But yet you draw not iron, for my heart
Is true as steel: leave you your power to draw,
And I shall have no power to follow you.

Dem. Do I entice you? do I speak you fair?
Or, rather, do I not in plainest truth 200
Tell you, I do not, nor I cannot love you?

Hel. And even for that do I love you the more.
I am your spaniel; and, Demetrius,
The more you beat me, I will fawn on you:
Use me but as your spaniel, spurn me, strike me,
Neglect me, lose me; only give me leave,
Unworthy as I am, to follow you.
What worser place can I beg in your love,—
And yet a place of high respect with me,—
Than to be used as you use your dog? 210

Dem. Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit,
For I am sick when I do look on thee.

Hel. And I am sick when I look not on you.

Dem. You do impeach your modesty too much,
To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one that loves you not;
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.

Hel. Your virtue is my privilege: for that 220
 It is not night when I do see your face,
 Therefore I think I am not in the night;
 Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,
 For you in my respect are all the world:
 Then how can it be said I am alone,
 When all the world is here to look on me?

Dem. I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes,
 And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts.

Hel. The wildest hath not such a heart as you.
 Run when you will, the story shall be changed: 230
 Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase;
 The dove pursues the griffin; the mild hind
 Makes speed to catch the tiger; bootless speed,
 When cowardice pursues and valour flies.

Dem. I will not stay thy questions; let me go:
 Or, if thou follow me, do not believe
 But I shall do thee mischief in the wood.

Hel. Ay, in the temple, in the town, the field,
 You do me mischief. Fie, Demetrius!
 Your wrongs do set a scandal on my sex: 240
 We cannot fight for love, as men may do;
 We should be woo'd and were not made to woo.

[*Exit Demetrius.*]

I'll follow thee and make a heaven of hell,
 To die upon the hand I love so well. [*Exit.*]

Obe. Fare thee well, nymph: ere he do leave this grove,
 Thou shalt fly him and he shall seek thy love.

Re-enter PUCK.

Hast thou the flower there? Welcome, wanderer.

Puck. Ay, there it is.

Obe. I pray thee, give it me.
 I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
 Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, 250
 Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
 With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:

There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
 Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;
 And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
 Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:
 And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
 And make her full of hateful fantasies.
 Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:
 A sweet Athenian lady is in love 260
 With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;
 But do it when the next thing he espies
 May be the lady: thou shalt know the man
 By the Athenian garments he hath on.
 Effect it with some carc that he may prove
 More fond on her than she upon her love:
 And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.
Puck. Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *Another part of the wood.**Enter TITANIA, with her train.*

Tita. Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;
 Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;
 Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,
 Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,
 To make my small elves coats, and some keep back
 The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
 At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;
 Then to your offices and let me rest.

The Fairies sing.

You spotted snakes with double tongue,
 Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
 Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,
 Come not near our fairy queen.
 Philomel, with melody
 Sing in our sweet lullaby;
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby, lulla, lulla, lullaby:

Never harm,
 Nor spell nor charm,
 Come our lovely lady nigh;
 So, good night, with lullaby.
 Weaving spiders, come not here; 20
 Hence, you long-legg'd spinners, hence!
 Beetles black, approach not near;
 Worm nor snail, do no offence.
 Philomel, with melody, &c.

A Fairy. Hence, away! now all is well:
 One aloof stand sentinel.

[*Exeunt Fairies. Titania sleeps.*]

Enter OBERON, and squeezes the flower on Titania's eyelids.

Obc. What thou seest when thou dost wake,
 Do it for thy true-love take,
 Love and languish for his sake:
 Be it ounce, or cat, or bear, 30
 Pard, or boar with bristled hair,
 In thy eye that shall appear
 When thou wakest, it is thy dear:
 Wake when some vile thing is near. [*Exit.*]

Enter LYSANDER and HERMIA.

Lys. Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood;
 And to speak troth, I have forgot our way:
 We'll rest us, Hermia, if you think it good,
 And tarry for the comfort of the day.

Her. Be it so, Lysander: find you out a bed;
 For I upon this bank will rest my head. 40

Lys. One turf shall serve as pillow for us both;
 One heart, one bed, two bosoms and one troth.

Her. Nay, good Lysander; for my sake, my dear,
 Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

Lys. O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!
 Love takes the meaning in love's conference.
 I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit
 So that but one heart we can make of it;

Two bosoms interchained with an oath;
 So then two bosoms and a single troth. 50
 Then by your side no bed-room me deny;
 For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

Her. Lysander riddles very prettily:
 Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,
 If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
 But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
 Lie further off; in human modesty,
 Such separation as may well be said
 Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
 So far be distant; and, good night, sweet friend: 60
 Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end!

Lys. Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I;
 And then end life when I end loyalty!
 Here is my bed: sleep give thee all his rest!

Her. With half that wish the wisher's eyes be press'd!
 [They sleep.]

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Through the forest have I gone,
 But Athenian found I none,
 On whose eyes I might approve
 This flower's force in stirring love.
 Night and silence.—Who is here? 70
 Weeds of Athens he doth wear;
 This is he, my master said,
 Despised the Athenian maid;
 And here the maiden, sleeping sound,
 On the dank and dirty ground.
 Pretty soul! she durst not lie
 Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.
 Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
 All the power this charm doth owe.
 When thou wakest, let love forbid 80
 Sleep his seat on thy eyelid:
 So awake when I am gone;
 For I must now to Oberon. [Exit.]

Enter DEMETRIUS and HELENA, running. -

Hel. Stay, though thou kill me, sweet Demetrius.

Dem. I charge thee, hence, and do not haunt me thus.

Hel. O, wilt thou darkling leave me? do not so.

Dem. Stay, on thy peril: I alone will go. [Exit.

Hel. O, I am out of breath in this fond chase!

The more my prayer, the lesser is my grace.

Happy is Hermia, wheresoe'er she lies; 90

For she hath blessed and attractive eyes.

How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers.

No, no, I am as ugly as a bear;

For beasts that meet me run away for fear:

Therefore no marvel though Demetrius

Do, as a monster, fly my presence thus.

What wicked and dissembling glass of mine

Made me compare with Hermia's sphery eyne?

But who is here? Lysander! on the ground! 100

Dead? or asleep? I see no blood, no wound.

Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake.

Lys. [Awaking.] And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake.

Transparent Helena! Nature shows art,

That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.

Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word

Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

Hel. Do not say so, Lysander; say not so.

What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?

Yet Hermia still loves you: then be content. 110

Lys. Content with Hermia! No; I do repent

The tedious minutes I with her have spent.

Not Hermia but Helena I love:

Who will not change a raven for a dove?

The will of man is by his reason sway'd;

And reason says you are the worthier maid.

Things growing are not ripe until their season :
 So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason ;
 And touching now the point of human skill,
 Reason becomes the marshal to my will 120
 And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook
 Love's stories written in love's richest book.

Hel. Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born ?
 When at your hands did I deserve this scorn ?
 Is't not enough, is't not enough, young man,
 That I did never, no, nor never can,
 Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,
 But you must flout my insufficiency ?
 Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,
 In such disdainful manner me to woo. 130
 But fare you well: perforce I must confess
 I thought you lord of more true gentleness.
 O, that a lady, of one man refused,
 Should of another therefore be abused! [*Exit.*]

Lys. She sees not Hermia. Hermia, sleep thou there :
 And never mayst thou come Lysander near !
 For as a surfeit of the sweetest things
 The deepest loathing to the stomach brings,
 Or as the heresies that men do leave
 Are hated most of those they did deceive, 140
 So thou, my surfeit and my heresy,
 Of all be hated, but the most of me !
 And, all my powers, address your love and might
 To honour Helen and to be her knight! [*Exit.*]

Her. [*Awaking.*] Help me, Lysander, help me! do thy
 best
 To pluck this crawling serpent from my breast !
 Ay me, for pity ! what a dream was here !
 Lysander, look how I do quake with fear :
 Methought a serpent eat my heart away,
 • And you st smiling at his cruel prey. 150
 Lysander ! what, removed ? Lysander ! lord !
 What, out of hearing ? gone ? no sound, no word ?

Alack, where are you? speak, an if you hear;
 Speak, of all loves! I swoon almost with fear.
 No? then I well perceive you are not nigh:
 Either death or you I'll find immediately.

[Exit.

ACT III.

SCENE I. *The wood. Titania lying asleep.*

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOUT, and
 STARVELING.

Bot. Are we all met?

Quin. Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous convenient place
 for our rehearsal. This green plot shall be our stage, this
 hawthorn-brake our tiring-house; and we will do it in action
 as we will do it before the duke.

Bot. Peter Quince,—

Quin. What sayest thou, bully Bottom?

Bot. There are things in this comedy of Pyramus
 and Thisby that will never please. First, Pyramus must
 draw a sword to kill himself; which the ladies cannot abide.
 How answer you that? 11

Snout. By'r lakin, a parlous fear.

Star. I believe we must leave the killing out, when all
 is done.

Bot. Not a whit: I have a device to make all well. Write
 me a prologue; and let the prologue seem to say, we will do
 no harm with our swords and that Pyramus is not killed
 indeed; and, for the more better assurance, tell them that
 I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver: this
 will put them out of fear. 20.

Quin. Well, we will have such a prologue; and it shall
 be written in eight and six.

Bot. No, make it two more; let it be written in eight and eight.

Snout. Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?

Star. I fear it, I promise you.

Bot. Masters, you ought to consider with yourselves: to bring in—God shield us!—a lion among ladies, is a most dreadful thing; for there is not a more fearful wild-fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to 't. 30

Snout. Therefore another prologue must tell he is not a lion.

Bot. Nay, you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck: and he himself must speak through, saying thus, or to the same defect,—‘Ladies,’—or ‘Fair ladies,—I would wish you,’—or ‘I would request you,’—or ‘I would entreat you,—not to fear, not to tremble: my life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life: no, I am no such thing; I am a man as other men are;’ and there indeed let him name his name, and tell them plainly he is Snug the joiner. 41

Quin. Well, it shall be so. But there is two hard things; that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

Snout. Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

Bot. A calendar, a calendar! look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

Quin. Yes, it doth shine that night.

Bot. Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open, and the moon may shine in at the casement. 51

Quin. Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine. Then, there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk though the chink of a wall.

Snout. You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom? 59

Bot. Some man or other must present Wall : and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper.

Quin. If that may be, then all is well. Come, sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts. Pyramus, you begin: when you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake: and so every one according to his cue.

Enter PUCK behind.

Puck. What hempen home-spuns have we swaggering here,
So near the cradle of the fairy queen?
What, a play toward! I'll be an auditor;
And actor too perhaps, if I see cause. 70

Quin. Speak, Pyramus. Thisby stand forth.

Bot. Thisby, the flowers of odious savours sweet,—

Quin. Odours, odours.

Bot. odours savours sweet:
So hath thy breath, my dearest Thisby dear.
But hark, a voice! stay thou but here awhile,

And by and by I will to thee appear. [Exit.]

Puck. A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here. [Exit.]

Flu. Must I speak now?

Quin. Ay, marry, must you; for you must understand he goes but to see a noise that he heard, and is to come again.

Flu. Most radiant Pyramus, most lily-white of hue, 82
Of colour like the red rose on triumphant brier,
Most briskly juvenal and eke most lovely Jew,
As true as truest horse that yet would never tire,
I'll meet thee, Pyramus, at Ninny's tomb.

Quin. 'Ninus' tomb,' man: why, you must not speak that yet; that you answer to Pyramus: you speak all your part at once, cues and all. Pyramus enter: your cue is past; it is, 'never tire.' 80

Flu. O,—As true as truest horse, that yet would never tire.

Re-enter PUCK, and BOTTOM with an ass's head.

Bot. If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine.

Quin. O monstrous! O strange! we are haunted. Pray, masters! fly, masters! Help!

[Exeunt Quince, Snug, Flute, Snout, and Starveling.]

Puck. I'll follow you, I'll lead you about a round,
Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier:
Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound,
A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire;
And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn, 100
Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn. *[Exit.]*

Bot. Why do they run away? this is a knavery of them to make me afraid.

Re-enter SNOOT.

Snout. O Bottom, thou art changed! what do I see on thee?

Bot. What do you see? you see an ass-head of your own, do you? *[Exit Snout.]*

Re-enter QUINCE.

Quin. Bless thee, Bottom! bless thee! thou art translated. *[Exit.]*

Bot. I see their knavery: this is to make an ass of me; to fright me, if they could. But I will not stir from this place, do what they can: I will walk up and down here, and I will sing, that they shall hear I am not afraid. *[Sings.]*

The ousel cock so black of hue, 114
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill,—

Tita. *[Awaking.]* What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

Bot. *[Sings]*

The finch, the sparrow and the lark, 120
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And darest not answer nay;—

for, indeed, who would set his wit to so foolish a bird? who would give a bird the lie, though he cry 'cuckoo' never so?

Tita. I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:
Mine ear is much enamour'd of thy note;
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;
And thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee. 129

Bot. Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that: and yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together now-a-days; the more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I can gleek upon occasion.

Tita. Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful.

Bot. Not so, neither: but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I have enough to serve mine own turn.

Tita. Out of this wood do not desire to go:
Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate: 140
The summer still doth tend upon my state;
And I do love thee: therefore, go with me;
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee,
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep,
And sing while thou on pressed flowers dost sleep:
And I will purge thy mortal grossness so
That thou shalt like an airy spirit go.
Peaseblossom! Cobweb! Moth! and Mustardseed!

Enter PEASEBLOSSOM, COBWEB, MOTH, and MUSTARDSEED.

Peas. Ready.

Cob. And I.

Moth. And I.

Mus. And I.

All. Where shall we go?

Tita. Be kind and courteous to this gentleman; 150
Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,

With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries;
The honey-bags steal from the humble bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes:
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

165

Peas. Hail, mortal!

Cob. Hail!

Moth. Hail!

Mus. Hail!

Bot. I cry your worships mercy, heartily: I beseech your worship's name.

Cob. Cobweb.

Bot. I shall desire you of more acquaintance, good Master Cobweb: if I cut my finger, I shall make bold with you. Your name, honest gentleman?

170

Peas. Peaseblossom.

Bot. I pray you, commend me to Mistress Squash, your mother, and to Master Peascod, your father. Good Master Peaseblossom, I shall desire you of more acquaintance too. Your name, I beseech you, sir?

Mus. Mustardseed.

Bot. Good Master Mustardseed, I know your patience well: that same cowardly, giant-like ox-beef hath devoured many a gentleman of your house: I promise you your kindred hath made my eyes water ere now. I desire your more acquaintance, good Master Mustardseed.

181

Tita. Come, wait upon him; lead him to my bower.

The moon methinks looks with a watery eye;
And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
Lamenting some enforced chastity.

Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently. [Exeunt.]

SCENE II. *Another part of the wood.**Enter OBERON.*

Obe. I wonder if Titania be awaked;
Then, what it was that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity.

Enter PUCK.

Here comes my messenger. How now, mad spirit!
What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

Puck. My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and consecrated bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of patches, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian stalls, 10
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that barren sort,
Who Pyramus presented, in their sport
Forsook his scene and enter'd in a brake:
When I did him at this advantage take,
An ass's noll I fixed on his head:
Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my mimic comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye, 20
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;
And, at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;
He murder cries and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong;
For briars and thorns at their apparel snatch;
Some sleeves, some hats, from yielders all things catch. 30

I led them on in this distracted fear,
And left sweet Pyramus translated there:
When in that moment, so it came to pass,
Titania waked and straightway loved an ass.

Obe. This falls out better than I could devise.
But hast thou yet latch'd the Athenian's eyes
With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

Puck. I took him sleeping,—that is finish'd too,—
And the Athenian woman by his side;
That, when he waked, of force she must be eyed. 40

Enter HERMIA and DEMETRIUS.

Obe. Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

Puck. This is the woman, but not this the man.

Dem. O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

Her. Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day 50
As he to me: would he have stolen away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole earth may be bored and that the moon
May through the centre creep and so displease
Her brother's noontide with the Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
So should a murderer look, so dead, so grim.

Dem. So should the murder'd look, and so should I,
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty:
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear, 60
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

Her. What's this to say Lysander? where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

Dem. I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

Her. Out, dog! out, cur! thou drivest me past the bounds

Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him, then?

Henceforth be never number'd among men!

O, once tell true, tell true, even for my sake!

Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake,

And hast thou killed him sleeping? O brave touch! 70

Could not a worm, an adder, do so much?

An adder did it; for with doubler tongue

Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

Dem. You spend your passion on a misprised mood:

I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;

Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

Her. I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

Dem. An if I could, what should I get therefore?

Her. A privilege never to see me more.

And from thy hated presence part I so: 80

See me no more, whether he be dead or no. [*Exit.*]

Dem. There is no following her in this fierce vein:

Here therefore for a while I will remain.

So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow

For debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe;

Which now in some slight measure it will pay,

If for his tender here I make some stay.

[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Obe. What hast thou done? thou hast mistaken quite

And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight:

Of thy misprision must perforce ensue 90

Some true love turn'd and not a false turn'd true.

Puck. Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, confounding oath on oath.

Obe. About the wood go swifter than the wind,

And Helena of Athens look thou find:

All fancy-sick she is and pale of cheer,

With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear:

By some illusion see thou bring her here:

I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

Puck. I go, I go; look how I go,
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow. 100
[Exit.]

Obe. Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with Cupid's archery,
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wakest, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Re-enter PUCK.

Puck. Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand; 110
And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be

Obe. Stand aside: the noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

Puck. Then will two at once woo one;
That must needs be sport alone;
And those things do best please me 120
That befall preposterously.

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA.

Lys. Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears:
Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born,
In their nativity all truth appears.

How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith, to prove them true?

Hel. You do advance your cunning more and more.

When truth kills truth, O devilish-holy fray!
These vows are Hermia's; will you give her o'er? 130

Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:
Your vows to her and me, put in two scales,
Will even weigh, and both as light as tales.

Lys. I had no judgement when to her I swore.'

Hel. Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

Lys. Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

Dem. [*Awaking.*] O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect,
divine!

To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow! 140
That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

Hel. O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment:
If you were civil and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must join in souls to mock me too? 150
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;
To vow, and swear, and superpraise my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia;
And now both rivals, to mock Helena:
A trim exploit, a manly enterprise,
To conjure tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! none of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin and extort 160
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

Lys. You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;
For you love Hermia; this you know I know:
And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love, I yield you up my part;
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love and will do till my death.

Hel. Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

Dem. Lysander, keep thy Hermia; I will none:
If e'er I loved her, all that love is gone. 170
My heart to her but as guest-wise sojourn'd,
And now to Helen is it home return'd,
There to remain.

Lys. Helen, it is not so.

Dem. Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest, to thy peril, thou aby it dear.
Look, where thy love comes; yonder is thy dear.

Re-enter HERMIA.

Her. Dark night, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes;
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense. 180
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why unkindly didst thou leave me so?

Lys. Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?

Her. What love could press Lysander from my side?

Lys. Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,
Fair Helena, who more engilds the night
Than all yon fiery oes and eyes of light.
Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know,
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so? 190

Her. You speak not as you think: it cannot be.

Hel. Lo, she is one of this confederacy!
Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.
Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspired, have you with these contrived
To bait me with this foul derision?
Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
•When we have chid the hasty-footed time 200
For parting us,—O, is all forgot?
All school-days' friendship, childhood innocence?

We, Hermia, like two artificial gods,
 Have with our needles created both one flower,
 Both on one sampler, sitting on one cushion,
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key,
 As if our hands, our sides, voices and minds,
 Had been incorporate. So we grew together,
 Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
 But yet an union in partition;
 Two lovely berries moulded on one stem;
 So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;
 Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
 Due but to one and crowned with one crest.
 And will you rent our ancient love asunder,
 To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
 It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:
 Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
 Though I alone do feel the injury.

210

Her. I am amazed at your passionate words.
 I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

220

Hel. Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
 To follow me and praise my eyes and face?
 And made your other love, Demetrius,
 Who even but now did spurn me with his foot,
 To call me goddess, nymph, divine and rare,
 Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this
 To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander
 Deny your love, so rich within his soul,
 And tender me, forsooth, affection,
 But by your setting on, by your consent?
 What though I be not so in grace as you,
 So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
 But miserable most, to love unloved?
 This you should pity rather than despise.

230

Her. I understand not what you mean by this.

Hel. Ay, do, persevere, counterfeit sad looks,
 Make mouths upon me when I turn my back;
 Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up:

This sport, well carried, shall be chronicled. 240
If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
You would not make me such an argument,
But fare ye well: 'tis partly my own fault;
Which death or absence soon shall remedy. .

Lys. Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse:
My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

Hel. O excellent!

Her. Sweet, do not scorn her so.

Dem. If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

Lys. Thou canst compel no more than she entreat:
Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.
Helen, I love thee; by my life I do: 251
I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
To prove him false that says I love thee not.

Dem. I say I love thee more than he can do.

Lys. If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

Dem. Quick, come!

Her. Lysander, whereto tends all this?

Lys. Away, you Ethiope!

Dem. No, no; he'll . . .
Seem to break loose; take on as you would follow,
But yet come not: you are a tame man, go!

Lys. Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent! 261

Her. Why are you grown so rude? what change is this?
Sweet love,—

Lys. Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

Her. Do you not jest?

Hel. Yes, sooth; and so do you.

• *Lys.* Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

Dem. I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak bond holds you: I'll not trust your word.

Lys. What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so. 270

Her. What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!
Am not I Hermia? are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.
Since night you loved me; yet since night you left me:
Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?

Lys. Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;
Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest 280
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

Her. O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stolen my love's heart from him?

Hel. Fine, i' faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

Her. Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare 290
Between our statures; she hath urged her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? speak;
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

Hel. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me: I was never curst; 300
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,

Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

Her. Lower! hark again.

Hel. Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your stealth unto this wood. 310
He follow'd you; for love I follow'd him;
But he hath chid me hence and threaten'd me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too:
And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back
And follow you no further: let me go:
You see how simple and how fond I am.

Her. Why, get you gone: who is't that hinders you?

Hel. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

Her. What, with Lysander?

Hel. With Demetrius. 320

Lys. Be not afraid; she shall not harm thee, Helena.

Dem. No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

Hel. O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
She was a vixen when she went to school;
And though she be but little, she is fierce.

Her. 'Little' again! nothing but 'low' and 'little'!
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
Let me come to her.

Lys. Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;
You bead, you acorn.

Dem. You are too officious 330
In her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone: speak not of Helena;
Take not her part; for, if thou dost intend

Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby it.

Lys. Now she holds me not ;
Now follow, if thou dardest, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

Dem. Follow ! nay, I'll go with thee, cheek by jole.

[*Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.*]

Her. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you :
Nay, go not back.

Hel. I will not trust you, I, 340
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
My legs are longer though, to run away. [*Exit.*]

Her. I am amazed, and know not what to say. [*Exit.*]

Obe. This is thy negligence, still thou mistakest,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.

Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on ?
And so far blameless proves my 'enterprise, 350
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes ;
And so far am I glad it so did sort
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

Obe. Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight :
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night ;
The starry welkin cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as Acheron,
And lead these testy rivals so astray
As one come not within another's way.
Like to Lysander sometime frame thy tongue, 360
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong ;
And sometime rail thou like Demetrius ;
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep
With leaden legs and batty wings doth creep :
Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye ;
Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,

To take from thence all error with his might,
And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
When they next wake all this derision 370
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,
And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
With league whose date till death shall never end.
Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy;
And then I will her charmed eye release
From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

Puck. My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger; 380
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone;
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They wilfully themselves exile from light
And must for aye consort with black-brow'd night.

Obe. But we are spirits of another sort:
I with the morning's love have oft made sport,
And, like a forester, the groves may tread, 390
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessed beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:
We may effect this business yet ere day. [Exit.

Puck. Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down:
I am fear'd in field and town:
Goblin, lead them up and down.

Here comes one. 400

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lys. Where art thou, proud Demetrius? speak thou
now.

Puck. Here, villain; drawn and ready. Where art thou?

Lys. I will be with thee straight.

Puck. Follow me, then,
To plainer ground. [*Exit Lysander, as following the voice.*]

Re-enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. Lysander! speak again:
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

Puck. Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come? Come, recreant; come, thou child;
I'll whip thee with a rod: he is defiled 410
That draws a sword on thee.

Dem. Yea, art thou there?

Puck. Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here.
[*Exeunt.*]

Re-enter LYSANDER.

Lys. He goes before me and still dares me on:
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.
The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I:
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly;
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me. [*Lies down.*] Come, thou gentle
day!

For if but once thou show me thy grey light,
I'll find Demetrius and revenge this spite. [Sleeps.]

Re-enter PUCK and DEMETRIUS.

Puck. Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why comest thou not? 421

Dem. Abide me, if thou darest; for well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And darest not stand, nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?

Puck. Come hither: I am here.

Dem. Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this
dear,
If ever I thy face by daylight see:
Now, go thy way. Faintness constraineth me

To measure out my length on this cold bed.
By day's approach look to be visited. [*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Re-enter HELENA.

Hel. O weary night, O long and tedious night, 431
Abate thy hours! Shine comforts from the east,
That I may back to Athens by daylight,
From these that my poor company detest:
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me awhile from mine own company.
[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Puck. Yet but three? Come one more;
Two of both kinds makes up four.
Here she comes, curst and sad:
Cupid is a knavish lad, 440
Thus to make poor females mad.

Re-enter HERMIA.

Her. Never so weary, never so in woe,
Bedabbled with the dew and torn with briers,
I can no further crawl, no further go;
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
Here will I rest me till the break of day.
Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!
[*Lies down and sleeps.*]

Puck. On the ground
Sleep sound:
I'll apply 450
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy.
[*Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eyes.*]
When thou wakest,
Thou takest
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye:
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown: 460

When I had at my pleasure taunted her
 And she in mild terms begg'd my patience,
 I then did ask of her her changeling child;
 Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
 To bear him to my bower in fairy land. 60
 And now I have the boy, I will undo
 This hateful imperfection of her eyes:
 And, gentle Puck, take this transformed scalp
 From off the head of this Athenian swain;
 That, he awaking when the other do,
 May all to Athens back again repair
 And think no more of this night's accidents
 But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
 But first I will release the fairy queen.

Be as thou wast wont to be; 70

See as thou wast wont to see:

Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower

Hath such force and blessed power.

Now, my Titania; wake you, my sweet queen.

Tita. My Oberon! what visions have I seen!
 Methought I was enamour'd of an ass!

Obe. There lies your love.

Tita. How came these things to pass?
 O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!

Obe. Silence awhile. Robin, take off this head.
 Titania, music call; and strike more dead 80
 Than common sleep of all these five the sense.

Tita. Music, ho! music, such as charmeth sleep! [*Music, still.*

Puck. Now, when thou wakest, with thine own fool's eyes
 peep.

Obe. Sound, music! Come, my queen, take hands with me,
 And rock the ground whereon these sleepers be.
 Now thou and I are new in amity
 And will to-morrow midnight solemnly
 Dance in Duke Theseus' house triumphantly
 And bless it to all fair prosperity:

There shall the pairs of faithful lovers be
Wedded, with Theseus, all in jollity. 90

Puck. Fairy king, attend, and mark :
I do hear the morning lark.

Obe. Then, my queen, in silence sad,
Trip we after night's shade :
We the globe can compass soon,
Swifter than the wandering moon.

Tita. Come, my lord, and in our flight
Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found 100
With these mortals on the ground. [*Exeunt.*
[*Horns winded within.*

'Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, EGEUS, and train.

The. Go, one of you, find out the forester ;
For now our observation is perform'd ;
And since we have the vaward of the day,
My love shall hear the music of my hounds.
Uncouple in the western valley ; let them go :
Dispatch, I say, and find the forester. [*Exit an Attendant.*
We will, fair queen, up to the mountain's top
And mark the musical confusion
Of hounds and echo in conjunction. 110

Hip. I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear
With hounds of Sparta : never did I hear
Such gallant chiding ; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry : I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

The. My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded, and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew ; 120
Crook-knee'd, and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls ;
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tuneable

Was never holla'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
 In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:
 Judge when you hear. But, soft! what nymphs are these?

Ege. My lord, this is my daughter here asleep;
 And this, Lysander; this Demetrius is;
 This Helena, old Nedar's Helena:
 I wonder of their being here together. 130

The. No doubt they rose up early to observe
 The rite of May, and, hearing our intent,
 Came here in grace of our solemnity.
 But speak, Egeus; is not this the day
 That Hermia should give answer of her choice?

Ege. It is, my lord.

The. Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.
 [*Horn and shouts within. Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and
 Hermia, wake and start up.*]

Good morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past:
 Begin these wood-birds but to couple now?

Lys. Pardon, my lord.

The. I pray you all, stand up. 140
 I know you two are rival enemies:
 How comes this gentle concord in the world,
 That hatred is so far from jealousy,
 To sleep by hate, and fear no enmity?

Lys. My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
 Half sleep, half waking: but as yet, I swear,
 I cannot truly say how I came here;
 But, as I think,—for truly would I speak,
 And now I do bethink me, so it is,—
 I came with Hermia hither: our intent 150
 Was to be gone from Athens, where we might,
 Without the peril of the Athenian law.

Ege. Enough, enough, my lord; you have enough:
 I beg the law, the law, upon his head.
 They would have stolen away; they would, Demetrius,
 Thereby to have defeated you and me,

You of your wife and me of my consent,
Of my consent that she should be your wife.

Dem. My lord, fair Helen told me of their stealth,
Of this their purpose hither to this wood; 160
And I in fury hither follow'd them,
Fair Helena in fancy following me.
But, my good lord, I wot not by what power,—
But by some power it is,—my love to Hermia,
Melted as the snow, seems to me now
As the remembrance of an idle gawd
Which in my childhood I did dote upon;
And all the faith, the virtue of my heart,
The object and the pleasure of mine eye,
Is only Helena. To her, my lord, 170
Was I betroth'd ere I saw Hermia:
But, like in sickness, did I loathe this food;
But, as in health, come to my natural taste,
Now I do wish it, love it, long for it,
And will for evermore be true to it.

The. Fair lovers, you are fortunately met:
Of this discourse we more will hear anon.
Egeus, I will overbear your will;
For in the temple, by and by, with us
These couples shall eternally be knit: 180
And, for the morning now is something worn,
Our purposed hunting shall be set aside.
Away with us to Athens; three and three,
We'll hold a feast in great solemnity.
Come, Hippolyta.

[*Exeunt Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus, and train.*]

Dem. These things seem small and undistinguishable,
Like far-off mountains turned into clouds.

Her. Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
When every thing seems double.

Hel. So methinks:
And I have found Demetrius like a jewel, 190
Mine own, and not mine own.

Dem. Are you sure
That we are awake? It seems to me
That yet we sleep, we dream. Do not you think
The duke was here, and bid us follow him?

Her. Yea; and my father.

Hel. And Hippolyta.

Lys. And he did bid us follow to the temple.

Dem. Why, then, we are awake: let's follow him;
And by the way let us recount our dreams. [*Exeunt.*]

Bot. [*Awaking.*] When my cue comes, call me, and I will answer: my next is, 'Most fair Pyramus.' Heigh-ho! Peter Quince! Flute, the bellows-mender! Snout, the tinker! Starveling! God's my life, stolen hence, and left me asleep! I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream: it shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of the play, before the duke: peradventure, to make it the more gracious, I shall sing it at her death. [*Exit.*]

SCENE II. *Athens.* QUINCE'S house.

Enter QUINCE, FLUTE, SNOOT, and STARVELING.

Quin. Have you sent to Bottom's house? is he come home yet?

Star. He cannot be heard of. Out of doubt he is transported.

Flu. If he come not, then the play is marred: it goes not forward, doth it?

Quin. It is not possible: you have not a man in all Athens able to discharge Pyramus but he.

Flu. No, he hath simply the best wit of any handicraft man in Athens. 10

Quin. Yea, and the best person too; and he is a very paramour for a sweet voice.

Flu. You must say 'paragon': a paramour is, God bless us, a thing of naught.

Enter SNUG.

Snug. Masters, the duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married: if our sport had gone forward, we had all been made men.

Flu. O sweet bully Bottom! Thus hath he lost sixpence a day during his life; he could not have 'scaped sixpence a day: an the duke had not given him sixpence a day for playing Pyramus, I'll be hanged; he would have deserved it: sixpence a day in Pyramus, or nothing.

Enter BOTTOM.

Bot. Where are these lads? where are these hearts?

Quin. Bottom! O most courageous day! O most happy hour!

Bot. Masters, I am to discourse wonders: but ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you every thing, right as it fell out.

Quin. Let us hear, sweet Bottom.

Bot. Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is, that the duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps; meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part; for the short and the long is, our play is preferred. In any case, let Thisby have clean linen; and let not him that plays the lion pare his nails, for they shall hang out for the lion's claws. And, most dear actors, eat no onions nor garlic, for we are to

utter sweet breath; and I do not doubt but to hear^t them say, it is a sweet comedy. No more words: away! go, away! [Exeunt.

ACT V.

SCENE I. *Athens. The palace of THESEUS.*

Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTA, PHILOSTRATE, Lords, and Attendants.

Hip. 'Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of.

The. More strange than true: I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet
Are of imagination all compact:
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic, 10
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy; 20
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

Hip. But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,

More witnesseth than fancy's images
And grows to something of great constancy;
But, howsoever, strange and admirable.

The. Here come the lovers, full of joy and mirth.

Enter LYSANDER, DEMETRIUS, HERMIA, *and* HELENA.

Joy, gentle friends! joy and fresh days of love
Accompany your hearts!

Lys. More than to us 30
Wait in your royal walks, your board, your bed!

The. Come now; what masques, what dances shall we
have,
To wear away this long age of three hours
Between our after-supper and bed-time?
Where is our usual manager of mirth?
What revels are in hand? Is there no play,
To ease the anguish of a torturing hour?
Call Philostrate.

Phil. Here, mighty Theseus.

The. Say, what abridgement have you for this evening?
What masque? what music? How shall we beguile 40
The lazy time, if not with some delight?

Phil. There is a brief how many sports are ripe:
Make choice of which your highness will see first.

[*Giving a paper.*]

The. [*Reads*] 'The battle with the Centaurs, to be sung
By an Athenian eunuch to the harp.'

We'll none of that: that have I told my love,
In glory of my kinsman Hercules.

[*Reads*] 'The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals,
Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage.'
That is an old device; and it was play'd 50
When I from Thebes came last a conqueror.

[*Reads*] 'The thrice three Muses mourning for the death
Of Learning, late deceased in beggary.'
That is some satire, keen and critical,
Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony.

[*Reads*] 'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
 And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth.'
 Merry and tragical! tedious and brief!
 That is, hot ice and wondrous strange snow.
 How shall we find the concord of this discord? 60

Phil. A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
 Which is as brief as I have known a play;
 But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
 Which makes it tedious; for in all the play
 There is not one word apt, one player fitted:
 And tragical, my noble lord, it is;
 For Pyramus therein doth kill himself.
 Which, when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
 Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
 The passion of loud laughter never shed. 70

The. What are they that do play it?

Phil. Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
 Which never labour'd in their minds till now,
 And now have toil'd their unbreathed memories
 With this same play, against your nuptial.

The. And we will hear it.

Phil. No, my noble lord;
 It is not for you: I have heard it over,
 And it is nothing, nothing in the world;
 Unless you can find sport in their intents,
 Extremely stretch'd and conn'd with cruel pain, 80
 To do you service.

The. I will hear that play;
 For never anything can be amiss,
 When simpleness and duty tender it.
 Go, bring them in: and take your places, ladies.
 [*Exit Philostrate.*]

Hip. I love not to see wretchedness o'ercharged
 And duty in his service perishing.

The. Why, gentle sweet, you shall see no such thing.

Hip. He says they can do nothing in this kind.

The. The kinder we, to give them thanks for nothing.
 Our sport shall be to take what they mistake: 90
 And what poor duty cannot do, noble respect
 Takes it in might, not merit.
 Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
 To greet me with premeditated welcomes;
 Where I have seen them shiver and look pale,
 Make periods in the midst of sentences,
 Throttle their practised accent in their fears
 And in conclusion dumbly have broke off,
 Not paying me a welcome. Trust me, sweet,
 Out of this silence yet I pick'd a welcome; 100
 And in the modesty of fearful duty
 I read as much as from the rattling tongue
 Of saucy and audacious eloquence.
 Love, therefore, and tongue-tied simplicity
 In least speak most, to my capacity.

Re-enter PHILOSTRATE.

Phil. So please your grace, the Prologue is address'd.

The. Let him approach. [*Flourish of trumpets.*]

Enter QUINCE for the Prologue.

Pro. If we offend, it is with our good will.
 That you should think, we come not to offend,
 But with good will. To show our simple skill, 110
 That is the true beginning of our end.
 Consider then we come but in despite.
 We do not come as minding to content you,
 Our true intent is. All for your delight
 We are not here. That you should here repent you,
 The actors are at hand and by their show
 You shall know all that you are like to know.

The. This fellow doth not stand upon points.

Lys. He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt; he knows
 not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to
 speak, but to speak true. 121

Hip. Indeed he hath played on his prologue like a child on a recorder; a sound, but not in government.

The. His speech was like a tangled chain; nothing impaired, but all disordered. Who is next?

Enter PYRAMUS and THISBE, WALL, MOONSHINE, and LION.

Pro. Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show;
 But wonder on, till truth make all things plain.
 This man is Pyramus, if you would know;
 This beauteous lady Thisby is certain.
 This man, with lime and rough-cast, doth present 130
 Wall, that vile Wall which did these lovers sunder;
 And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content
 To whisper. At the which let no man wonder.
 This man, with lanthorn, dog, and bush of thorn,
 Presenteth Moonshine; for, if you will know,
 By moonshine did these lovers think no scorn
 To meet at Ninus' tomb, there, there to woo.
 This grisly beast, which Lion hight by name,
 The trusty Thisby, coming first by night,
 Did scare away, or rather did affright; 140
 And, as she fled, her mantle she did fall,
 Which Lion vile with bloody mouth did stain.
 Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
 And finds his trusty Thisby's mantle slain:
 Whereat, with blade, with bloody blameful blade,
 He bravely broach'd his boiling bloody breast;
 And Thisby, tarrying in mulberry shade,
 His dagger drew, and died. For all the rest,
 Let Lion, Moonshine, Wall, and lovers twain
 At large discourse, while here they do remain. 150

[Exeunt Prologue, Thisbe, Lion, and Moonshine.]

The. I wonder if the lion be to speak.

Dem. No wonder, my lord: one lion may, when many asses do.

Wall. In this same interlude it doth befall
 That I, one Snout by name, present a wall;

And Such a wall, as I would have you think,
 That had in it a crannied hole or chink,
 Through which the lovers, Pyramus and Thisby,
 Did whisper often very secretly.
 This loam, this rough-cast and this stone doth show 160
 That I am that same wall; the truth is so:
 And this the cranny is, right and sinister,
 Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper.

The. Would you desire lime and hair to speak better?

Dem. It is the wittiest partition that ever I heard discourse, my lord.

Enter PYRAMUS.

The. Pyramus draws near the wall: silence!

Pyr. O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!
 O night, which ever art when day is not!
 O night, O night! alack, alack, alack, 170

I fear my Thisby's promise is forgot!
 And thou, O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall,
 That stand'st between her father's ground and mine!
 Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
 Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne!

[Wall holds up his fingers.]

Thanks, courteous wall: Jove shield thee well for this!

But what see I? No Thisby do I see.
 O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!
 Cursed be thy stones for thus deceiving me!

The. The wall, methinks, being sensible, should curse again. 181

Pyr. No, in truth, sir, he should not. 'Deceiving me' is Thisby's cue: she is to enter now, and I am to spy her through the wall. You shall see, it will fall pat as I told you. Yonder she comes.

Enter THISBY.

This. O wall, full often hast thou heard my moans,
 For parting my fair Pyramus and me!
 My cherry lips have often kiss'd thy stones,
 Thy stones with lime and hair knit up in thee.

The. Well run, Thisbe.

Hip. Well shone, Moon. Truly the moon shines with
a good grace. [*The Lion shakes Thisbe's mantle, and exit.*]

The. Well moused, Lion.

Lys. And so the lion vanished.

Dem. And then came Pyramus. 260

Enter PYRAMUS.

Pyr. Sweet Moon, I thank thee for thy sunny beams;
I thank thee, Moon, for shining now so bright;
For, by thy gracious, golden, glittering gleams,
I trust to take of truest Thisby sight.

But stay, O spite!

But mark, poor knight,

What dreadful dole is here!

Eyes, do you see?

How can it be?

O dainty duck! O dear! 270

Thy mantle good,

What, stain'd with blood!

Approach, ye Furies fell!

O Fates, come, come,

Cut thread and thrum;

Quail, crush, conclude, and quell!

The. This passion, and the death of a dear friend, would
go near to make a man look sad.

Hip. Beshrew my heart, but I pity the man.

Pyr. O wherefore, Nature, didst thou lions frame? 280
Since lion vile hath here deflower'd my dear:
Which is—no, no—which was the fairest dame

That lived, that loved, that liked, that look'd with cheer.

Come, tears, confound;

Out, sword, and wound

The pap of Pyramus;

Ay, that left pap,

Where heart doth hop: [*Stabs himself.*]

Thus die I, thus, thus, thus.

Now am I dcad,

290

Now am I fled;

My soul is in the sky :

Tongue, lose thy light ;

Moon, take thy flight : [Exit Moonshine.

Now die, die, die, die, die. [Dies.

Dem. No die, but an ace, for him ; for he is but one.

Lys. Less than an ace, man ; for he is dead ; he is nothing.

The. With the help of a surgeon he might yet recover, and prove an ass.

Hip. How chance Moonshine is gone before Thisbe comes baek and finds her lover ?

301

The. She will find him by starlight. Here she comes ; and her passion ends the play.

Re-enter THISBE.

Hip. Methinks she should not use a long one for such a Pyramus : I hope she will be brief.

Dem. A mote will turn the balance, which Pyramus, which Thisbe, is the better ; he for a man, God warrant us ; she for a woman, God bless us.

Lys. She hath spied him already with those sweet eyes.

Dem. And thus she means, videlicet :—

310

This. Asleep, my love ?

What, dcad, my dove ?

O Pyramus, arise !

Speak, speak. Quite dumb ?

Dead, dead ? A tomb

Must cover thy sweet eyes.

These lily lips,

This cherry nose,

These yellow cowslip cheeks,

Are gone, are gone :

320

Lovers, make moan :

His eyes were green as leeks.

O Sisters Three,

Come, come to me,

With hands as pale as milk;
 Lay them in gore,
 Since you have shore
 With shears his thread of silk.

Tongue, not a word:
 Come, trusty sword: 330
 Come, blade, my breast imbrue: [*Stabs herself.*
 And, farewell, friends;
 Thus Thisby ends:
 Adieu, adieu, adieu. [*Dies.*

The. Moonshine and Lion are left to bury the dead.

Dem. Ay, and Wall too.

Bot. [*Starting up.*] No, I assure you; the wall is down that parted their fathers. Will it please you to see the epilogue, or to hear a Bergomask dance between two of our company?

The. No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse; for when the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed. Marry, if he that writ it had played Pyramus and hanged himself in Thisbe's garter, it would have been a fine tragedy: and so it is, truly; and very notably discharged. But, come, your Bergomask: let your epilogue alone. [*A dance.*

The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve:

Lovers, to bed; 'tis almost fairy time.

I fear we shall out-sleep the coming morn

As much as we this night have overwatch'd. 350

This palpable gross play hath well beguiled

The heavy gait of night. Sweet friends, to bed.

A fortnight hold we this solemnity,

In nightly revels and new jollity. [*Exeunt.*

Enter PUCK.

Puck. Now the hungry lion roars,

And the wolf behowls the moon;

Whilst the heavy ploughman snores,

All with weary task fordone.

Now the wasted brands do glow,

Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud, 360

Puts the wretch that lies in woe
In remembrance of a shroud.
Now it is the time of night
That the graves all gaping wide,
Every one lets forth his sprite,
In the church-way paths to glide:
And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic: not a mouse
Shall disturb this hallow'd house:
I am sent with broom before,
To sweep the dust behind the door.

370

Enter OBERON and TITANIA with their train.

- Obe.* Through the house give glimmering light,
By the dead and drowsy fire:
Every elf and fairy sprite
Hop as light as bird from brier;
And this ditty, after me,
Sing, and dance it trippingly. 380
- Tita.* First, rehearse your song by rote,
To each word a warbling note:
Hand in hand, with fairy grace,
Will we sing, and bless this place. [*Song and dance.*]
- Obe.* Now, until the break of day,
Through this house each fairy stray.
To the best bride-bed will we,
Which by us shall blessed be;
And the issue there create
Ever shall be fortunate. 390
So shall all the couples three
Ever true in loving be;
And the blots of Nature's hand
Shall not in their issue stand;
Never mole, hare lip, nor scar,
Nor mark prodigious such as are

Despised in nativity,
Shall upon their children be.
With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait ; 400
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace ;
And the owner of it blest
Ever shall in safety rest.
Trip away ; make no stay ;
Meet me all by break of day.

[*Exeunt Oberon, Titania and train.*]

Puck. If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here
While these visions did appear. 410
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend :
If you pardon, we will mend:
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearned luck
Now to 'scape the serpent's tongue,
We will make amends ere long ;
Else the Puck a liar call :
So, good night unto you all. 420
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends. [Exit.]